- CHAPTER 12 -
WIZARD OF WINES

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About the Author

Wyatt Trull is a bestselling author of over fifty D&D products. He got his start publishing Curse of Strahd supplements, such as *Escaping Death House* and *The Wedding at Ravenloft*. He has DM'ed Curse of Strahd thrice and, at the time of writing, is in the middle of his fourth run. Dogged by a love of all things Ravenloft and crippling debts, he decided to write his own guide to Curse of Strahd in the wake of his bestselling *Dungeon of Mad Mage Companion*.

Using This Supplement

The *Curse of Strahd Companion* (hereafter simply "the *Companion*") is devoted to making the most out of your campaign. It provides tested advice, variants, dialogue, flavor text, and new encounters to better enhance your experience running one of the greatest modules of D&D. True to its name, it is meant to be your constant tableside companion before and during a session.

Why A Companion?

Even five years after its publication, Curse of Strahd is still lauded as 5th Edition's greatest campaigns: it is firmly rooted in gothic horror and provides a tight narrative nestled in a sandbox-like environment. The campaign's chief flaw, the *Companion* holds, is its organization—its buried details and uncommunicated direction. A Dungeon Master that fails to carefully read the module from cover to cover can find themselves later trapped when an important and missed detail crops up. The *Companion* seeks to remedy this: it looks forward so you don't have to. It also exists to streamline your session through advice, dialogue, and the providing of statistics (for monsters, magic items, and hazards) you would otherwise have to dig through other manuals for.

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Companion Structure

The *Companion* is formulaic. Each chapter corresponds with a Curse of Strahd chapter:

Chapter 1 acts as a campaign overview, concerned with its characters and narratives.
Chapter 2 concerns Barovia itself, with an interest in its weather, geography, random encounters, and locations.
Chapters 3-15 concern their matching chapters in Curse of Strahd (i.e., both Chapter 3 of the Companion and Curse of Strahd concern the Village of Barovia).
Appendices of the Companion provide the information for any a) magic items, b) creatures, and c) effects that appear in the campaign. For example, Appendix B of Chapter 3 provides statistics for all creatures found in the Village of Barovia.
Death House revises the campaign prologue and provides new aids to better run it.

Glossary

The *Companion* makes the most of several terms:

CoS refers to Curse of Strahd
CMP refers to the Companion
App. refers to an appendix of *CoS* or *CMP*
Destined Ally refers to the Strahd's enemy, the ally that is destined to stand with the party, as determined by the Fortunes of Ravenloft
Final Confrontation refers to the location in Castle Ravenloft where the adventurers are fated to fight Strahd to the death.

Chapter 12: Wizard of Wines

The loss of the Wizard of Wines winery is a blow felt by Barovians everywhere. The wine must flow, lest Barovians lose their last comfort in this dismal realm. This plot, identified by the *Companion* as *The Lifeblood of Barovia* in Chapter 1, has its hooks throughout the realm. For some time now, Barovians have wondered why the wine has ceased to flow. From Krezk to the Village of Barovia, the lack of wine has not gone unnoticed.

Ordinarily, the adventurers are sent here to reclaim some wine before being permitted into Krezk. The *Companion* suggests otherwise, if the adventurers still have Ireena Kolyana with them. The Companion also urges you to consider Chapters 12 and Chapter 14 to be the same congruent story through a simple trick: the Martikovs, already wounded and debilitated by an anti-wereraven incense, will be abducted and taken to Yester Hill to be sacrificed.

Chapter Overview

Chapter 12 concerns the fate of the Martikov family, the truest and most powerful allies the adventurers could hope for in their fight against Strahd. In the module, reclaiming the winery proves to the Martikovs that the Keepers of the Feather can trust the adventurers—or at least owe them. Ultimately, however, the winery is an opportunity for the adventurers to score a well-needed victory—at least on the surface, for most of the wine the adventurers can recover is poisoned, and the Martikovs are abducted during the *Blood and Wine* storyline described below.

The *Companion* dedicates this chapter to the dark side of druidism. It presents the winery and vineyard as an overgrown nightmare, a riot of bloodthirsty, black vines that move of their own volition—vines that grow from the Gulthias Tree at Yester Hill itself. The druids prove fierce and savage, and the blights innumerable. All hope relies on seizing the *Gulthias staff* wielded by one of the druids and snapping to kill all blights. Per the *Companion*, Davian Martikov knows of this staff and demands the adventurers destroy it. Destroying the staff kills all blights at the winery, in the vineyard, and surrounding woods (up from the ordinary 300 feet the staff usually ranges). It becomes the clear objective, thoroughly communicated by the chapter's quest giver.

Chapter 14 is a direct sequel to this chapter, one that should follow immediately afterwards. To that end, the *Companion's Blood and Wine* storyline sees the surviving Martikovs abducted in the adventurers' absence to be sacrificed at Yester Hill.

Author's Criticisms

Chapter 12 is just about the most lazily written chapter in all of Curse of Strahd, and its structure is riddled with holes. The *Companion* does its best to address these issues:

- The Martikovs, being wereravens, are immune to nonmagical, nonsilvered attacks—guess what damage blights (and Baba Lysaga's scarecrows) do? It has always boggled my mind that the Keepers of the Feather fell to such mundane attackers. Sure, the druids are armed with spellcraft, but the wereravens can *fly* away from the blights. Further, their holdings are guarded by the watchful eyes of ravens, whom the Martikovs clearly can communicate with in some fashion. It makes no sense that the Keepers were caught unawares and then harmed, when one wereraven can reliably destroy countless blights without being harmed. Hence, the "Crowpoison" revision in *Variants & Revisions*.
- The horde of blights outside are meant to drive the adventurers inside, but here are the sour truths: 1) if it has hit points, players will kill it; 2) mass combat in 5th Edition is slow at best and agony at its worst. From the very moment the horde of blights received numbers and statistics, it was defeated. A single *fireball* spell can wipe out the entire horde and, with it, the tension. To have any narrative effect, the horde must be infinite but restrained: harming it is futile, fighting it is futile, but as long as the adventurers remain on the move, it won't harm them, only drive the story along. It deserves only to be a set piece.
- That only four nameless druids and a handful of blights inhabit the winery is a joke. The module could only be bothered to describe their appearances. The Dungeon Master is given no names, no roleplaying advice, no dialogue, and no better story hooks to Yester Hill. The designers chose to give no salt or identity to these druids, and simply treats them as the expendable mooks the adventurers have been so long denied in this difficult campaign.

Chapter Progression

This chapter loosely follows a short, three-act story, provided *Blood and Wine* is run:

Act I spans meeting the Martikovs and learning what ails the winery.

Act II involves the adventurers striking out against the winery in full force and braving a gauntlet of druidic attacks, until the reclamation of the winery.

Act III has the adventurers return victorious, only to learn that the Martikovs were taken to Yester Hill to be sacrificed.

In the Aftermath, the adventurers must venture to Yester Hill to save the Martikovs.

Quick Notes

- Assume the Martikovs know of the adventurers already, thanks to the Keepers of the Feather and ravens stationed elsewhere in Barovia.
- Assume that the druids and blights can overcome a wereraven's immunity to nonmagical attacks, otherwise this chapter of Curse of Strahd makes utterly no sense. See *Variants & Revisions f*or details.
- If the *Evil's Bride* storyline was run in Krezk prior to this chapter, pin a wedding invitation from Strahd somewhere in the winery, preferably the first door the adventurers reach.
- Most wine has been poisoned, which will lead to many deaths throughout Barovia.
- The *Companion* has added quite a lot of lore to this chapter and Chapter 14:
  - Davian Martikov's great grandmother was a "wildling" that left the tribe when the druids began to worship Strahd as a god.
  - The Gulthias Tree at Yester Hill was first watered with the blood of Strahd, freely given.
  - The Gulthias' druids leader is, allegedly, a dhampir bastard of Strahd's, born from the then-dead womb of Volenta Popofsky and left to die in the Svalich Woods. Found by wolves and wildlings, the dhampir druid rose to prominence and is responsible for the worship of Strahd as a god; he is referred to as "the Prophet." (This is false, however; the Prophet is no son of Strahd's.)

Checklist

- Have the adventurers encounter Dag Toranescu or a Martikov before they reach the winery.
- Through Davian Martikov, clearly communicate that the *Gulthias staff* can destroy the nearby blights if broken.
- Do not just reveal to the players that the wine has been poisoned.

Running the Chapter

Once the adventurers commit to breaching the winery, this chapter becomes a rush of combat. There is almost no way to sneak into the winery; the blights outside notice any visitors and accost the doors and walls. A single spell or shout made by the druids therein will alert all other foes. The winery is no dungeon whose rooms are muffled by cold, stone walls; once one combatant is alerted, all will be—and they will come towards the adventurers. Thus, this chapter truly comes down to a battle between the adventurers and the druids with their blight minions. The Companion has overhauled the druids' identities, statistics, and spell lists to provide for a memorable battle.

Once this battle ends, the adventurers stand victorious. Snapping the *Gulthias staff* slays all blights nearby. Thus, outside of meeting with the Martikovs (see *Blood and Wine*), this entire chapter is concluded within ten in-game minutes.

Time

If the adventurers were sent to the winery before gaining access to Krezk, assume it is dusk. If the adventurers managed to enter Krezk without wine, and *Evil's Bride* (see CMP Ch. 8) was run, assume it is midday when the adventurers arrive.

Weather

It is lightly raining when the adventurers approach the winery. The weather grows worse the closer they are to Yester Hill. In this sense, the weather acts as an overture for that chapter.

Dramatis Personae

Character	Statistics	Role	Area	Description
Adrian Martikov	**Wereraven**	P	B&W	Davian's eldest son.
Claudiu Martikov	**Wereraven**	P	B&W	Stefania & Dag's eldest son.
Dag Tomescu	**Wereraven**	P	B&W	Stefania's husband.
Davian Martikov	**Wereraven**	P	B&W	Martikov patriarch and grandmaster of the Keepers of the Feather.
Drekht	See App. B	A	W14	An otherwise nameless druid given an identity by the *Companion*.
Elvir Martikov	**Wereraven**	P	B&W	Davian's youngest son.
Esmardeus	See App. B	A	W16	An otherwise nameless druid given an identity by the *Companion*.
Martin Martikov	**Wereraven** (7 HP)	P	B&W	Stefania & Dag's son.
Nala	See App. B	A	W9	An otherwise nameless druid given an identity by the *Companion*.
Revyr	**Wereraven**	A	W20	An otherwise nameless druid given an identity by the *Companion*.
Stefania Martikov	**Wereraven**	P	B&W	Davian's daughter.
Viggo Martikov	**Wereraven** (7 HP)	P	B&W	Stefania & Dag's son.
Yolanda Martikov	N/A	P	B&W	Stefania & Dag's baby daughter.

Dramatis Personae

This chapter features the following characters, only three of which warrant further attention:

Davian Martikov

Davian is an old, done man that knows that Death waits for no one but the Devil Strahd. For decades now has he served Barovia, its people, and the Keepers of the Feather. As patriarch of the Martikovs, he assumed the title of Grandmaster after his mother passed away. He is a crotchety, old man with little concern for what is polite or proper. He has considered himself to be a little too wild for high society. Davian is also one of the few in Barovia who dares speak Strahd's name aloud.

Lore. Davian is the premier source of lore for this chapter and Chapter 14. Weave the following sample dialogue in naturally.

- Davian explains the recent attack, conveniently omitting the magical gemstone: "For decades now, the druids of Yester Hill have coveted our fertile lands. They know that seldom in Barovia does soil as rich as ours exists."
- Davian further explains why the druids so sadistically tormented the Martikovs: "Know this: our family hails from those damned druidfolk. My grandmother's mother danced there under the moonlight beside the wildlings. She worshiped the same gods, obeyed the same traditions, and partook in the same rituals as they did. But when the druids began to worship the Devil himself—for it is known that he is the Ancient, they said, he is the Land—she left. And they've forgiven her, or us, for it." (While the *Companion* revises the Martikov history to make this true, it conveniently leaves out the Wizard of Wines gemstones, which is the true motive for the druids; generational revenge is just an added bonus.)
- The winery has become covered in vines. When mentioned, Davian explains, "I should have excised those black vines years ago, but oft did I and my brothers brush them off for signs of rot or enrichment. At first, we would clear them away by axe and by fire, but when the harvest proved just as ripe year after year, we consigned them to memory. We grew lazy. We accepted the vines as a feature of our fertile lands. This, I now know, is a reckoning sixty years in the making. The Morninglord alone knows how far those vines have traveled and who they trouble."
- Davian explains what he knows about Yester Hill: "To the south rises Yester Hill, named so for the wall of fog that dances beside it—a fog within which the memories of the past are reflected. Since time immemorial, the wildlings have laid their greatest kin to rest there; we've likely some ancestors there ourselves. A tree grows there, a tree that should not be, a tree that thirsts for the blood and flesh of men. A tree whose seed, as my great grandmother confided, was first watered with the blood of the Devil Strahd himself! Blood, freely given! It is said that the archdruid that commands this cult is the bastard of Strahd, born from the dead womb of his vampiric bride and left to die to the wolves of the Svalich Woods!"

Roleplaying Blights

The blights, while not true characters, can be roleplayed. When in doubt, assume twig blights cackle like little devils and the "flesh" of needle blights writhe with needles when they are upset. Vine blights alone can speak, and they all croak out the same phrase: one begins with, "The seed has borne bitter fruit!" and the nearest vine blight adds, "We are that fruit!" The vine blights otherwise just mutter about seeds and fruit (e.g., "But the fruit..." when they are slain).

Esmardeus

Esmardeus is a wildling druid fond of hard-hitting spells. As grandson to "the Prophet" of Yester Hill, Esmardeus has the honor of leading the Gulthias druids stationed here and wielding the *Gulthias staff*. He is both a fanatic and a fool; as his grandfather before him, Esmardeus believes the blood of Strahd runs through his veins. The possibility of his own death is lost to Esmardeus, whose zealotry would forbid him from abandoning his "sacred" mission anyway.

Esmardeus speaks in Druidic, but can manage half-fluency in Common. In Druidic, however, he spills several secrets alongside his taunts, which any fluent character could then learn:

- "Nature bows to my every whim, for I have the vampire's staff!"
- "He is the Ancient! He is the Land! Praise be!"
- "The Prophet shall see this world in ruins! Let the vines grow old on the stone and the people know we laid them low!"
- "I am heir to the Devil's throne!"

Variants & Revisions

The *Companion* makes several changes to this chapter:

- The Martikovs are hiding in a cabin a few miles from the winery, instead of a grove.
- Davian Martikov's great grandmother was a wildling druid, but left once the tribe began to worship Strahd. This, coupled with the desire for Wizard of Wines gemstones, have propelled the druids to attack.
- The four druids featured inside the winery (but not the horde outside) have all received unique statistics and roles in the inevitable battle.

Blood Feud

Per the *Companion*, the Martikovs are in a decades-long feud with the Gulthias druids. Davian Martikov's grandmother was born to the druids years ago and left after many began to worship Strahd as a god. This alone adds a more personal motivation for the druids.

The Briarthorn Riot

The *Companion* gives the winery a makeover that better presents the dark side of druidism. The entirety of the winery has become overgrown with black, bloodthirsty vines that lead back to the Gulthias Tree itself. For decades now have those roots crept underground, reaching out to feed on its future enemies. Some vines are as thin as a finger; others are thick enough to choke a horse to death. The winery's well (Area W6) is the source of these vines, which have ruptured out from below to strangle the winery.

Crowpoison: Ravenbane

Known as *nothoscordum bivalve* by herbalists and "false garlic" by peasants, crowpoison is a wild, scentless flower frequented by butterflies. It can be identified with a successful DC 14 Intelligence (Nature) check.

Consumption. A wereraven that consumes a sprig of crowpoison is poisoned for 1d6 hours, and must make a DC 13 Constitution saving throw, taking 41 (7d8 + 10) poison damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one. The wereraven is also poisoned for 1d6 hours.

Incense. The druids of Yester Hill have found crowpoison and devised a noxious incense that sickens wereravens and deprives them of their ability to shapeshift. A wereraven that starts its turn within 60 feet of the incense, or enters within that range for the first time on its turn, must succeed on a DC 18 Constitution saving throw or be poisoned for 24 hours. While poisoned, the wereraven loses its immunity to nonmagical, nonsilvered attacks and can't use its Shapechanger feature to transform.

Crowpoison

Just how the Gulthias druids can overpower lycanthropes—beings with immunity to nonmagical, nonsilvered attacks—is never addressed in Curse of Strahd. Spellcraft, of course, can overcome a lycanthrope's natural defenses, but any attack made by a blight would fail to even scratch a wereraven. The Keepers of the Feather could, even if surprised, tear apart any unharmed. So long as they aren't struck down with magic, the wereravens ought to triumph over mere druids too.

The solution is crowpoison, an agent that is to a wereraven what wolfsbane is to a werewolf. Wyatt Trull, the *Companion's* author, came up with it when writing *Van Richten's Treatise on Lycanthropy*, in which all thirteen lycanthrope phenotypes required some harmful herb or agent, such as belladonna for werebears.

Through crowpoison, the Gulthias druids overpowered the wereravens by depriving the wereravens of their lycanthropic resilience and shapeshifting. The wolfsbane carried by the Vistani earlier in the campaign (see *CMP* Ch. 2) foreshadows crowpoison. An astute character that identifies crowpoison comes all that closer to proving the Martikovs are wereravens. Crowpoison incense is scattered throughout this chapter.

The Prophet

The Gulthias leader—known as the Prophet—is believed by the wildlings to be the dhampir son of Strahd, born from Volenta Popofsky's dead womb on the night of her vampiric turning and abandoned by Strahd in the woods. As the legend goes, the son was found and raised by wolves and wildlings. Because the Gulthias Tree itself was watered with the blood of a vampire—if it was not tainted by the evil of the *Tome of Strahd*, if your tarokka reading indicated Yester Hill as the site of that Fortune of Life—the myth has been cemented.

This all, of course, is nonsense. As will be revealed in Chapter 14, the Prophet is nothing more than a charlatan, a druid whose advanced power has slowed his aging, and a follower of Kavan's example (the blood-drinking chieftain of yore).

Blood and Wine

This storyline streamlines Chapter 12 without bloating it by following a simple three-act structure for an extremely quick chapter. The adventurers encounter Dag Toranescu of the Martikovs prior to reaching the winery; provided they play ball, Dag leads them to where the Martikovs are sheltering. There, the adventurers learn a wealth of information, most importantly that the druids carry a magical staff that, if snapped, should kill all nearby blights. With a clear objective in mind, the adventurers can then strike out for the winery, where a short but highly tactical battle will be waged. Having secured a sorely needed victory in Barovia, the adventurers return to find their actions were for naught: the Martikovs have been abducted and taken to Yester Hill.

I. Clipped Wings

The adventurers are on a collision course with the Martikovs, who are sheltering in a crumbling cabin some miles away from the winery (rather than a nearby grove in Curse of Strahd only a few hundred feet from a horde of blights). The Martikovs are a proud and paranoid folk—two aspects heightened by the curse of the wereraven. In less dire situations, they would not sink to asking outsiders for aid—not when they have political influence, financial clout, goodwill, and a *retinue* of wereravens to call upon. Alas, this is the Martikov family at its lowest: driven from home, deprived of their funds, cut off from their allies, and *robbed* of their lycanthropic birthright.

Poisoned by crowpoison incense, the Martikovs cannot shapeshift or enjoy lycanthropic resilience. Losing their affinity for mundane ravens is also in the realm of possibility. At any rate, the family is confined to this rotting shack without even a scrap of paper to their name. Even still, it takes Dag Torenscu—a husband that married into the family and not bound by its stricter attitude—to seek aid.

Dag Seeks Help

Davian, as patriarch, has forbidden soliciting outside assistance, just as the Keepers of the Feather have done so for years. The other Martikovs are similarly shackled by pride and paranoia. Only Dag Tomescu, raised elsewhere and freed from this generational attitude, dares to seek aid. It is he who approaches the adventurers on their way to the winery.

When Dag makes himself known to the adventurers, it's in his true form. Read the following:

> The road meanders further to the south. At a crossroads of trails, you spot a signpost covered with mud. As you swipe away the muck to read the sign, you hear a voice pipe up behind you: "Go no further, my friends."
>
> You whirl about to see a pale man with bright eyes. Half his face is covered with a damp bandage in sore need of changing. The smile he tries to muster only causes him to wince. "Go no further," he repeats. "If it is wine you seek, you'll find only blood at the winery. Creatures of the forest…creatures with no earthly business being alive…stormed our home two nights hence. We barely escaped with our lives. If you wish to keep yours, I suggest you turn back."
>
> The man pauses and furrows his brow, as if to study you. "However," he concedes, "if you wish to aid the Martikov family, and Barovia itself, if you are no friend of the Devil's or the darkness, come with me. And, gods above, if you are capable of divine healing, we are in sore need of a priest."

Dag introduces himself and elaborates on the state of the winery and the recent attack. As with all wereravens, Dag never reveals his wereraven curse, nor the existence of the Keepers of the Feather. Instead, he offers a very sanitized and rehearsed explanation: "wildling" druids jealous of the fertile Martikov lands attacked with a horde of "chlorofiends" two days ago. Recognizing the strangers and relating them to reports by other Keepers of the Feather, he requests they follow him to the Martikov's refuge to offer aid and healing.

Dag carries with him a small pouch of berries and a dead rabbit. He explains that he has been foraging and hunting to feed the family: "Skilled at buschcraft they may be," Dag says, "but the family has grown soft. Too used to the comforts of a noble's life. And wounded they are as well. It falls to dear old Dag to find food."

Blighted Scouts. Knowing their foes must still lurk out in the woods, the druids sent forth a scouting party of two vine blights, which accost the adventurers as they near the cabin. Read the following:

> Following Dag through the darkened woods, you notice how wild this corner of the Svalich Woods is. The forest floor is a riot of black vines, some as thin as a finger and others able to strangle a horse. Your eyes follow a vine that stretches up a tree to a bloodied bird's nest.
>
> "These damned vines!" Dag snarls, glaring at a black vine as thick as an oar wrapped around a tree trunk. Shaking his head, he explains, "It was at the roots this morning. There are more, all growing out from the winery… from our well."

The adventurers are given the opportunity to respond to Dag, but their conversation is cut short. The two **vine blights** attack, one rising from the first floor near the least armored adventurer and another slinking down the trees. Thanks to their False Appearance trait, the blights were completely hidden and, as such, surprise the party. When the blights attack, one croaks, "The seed has borne bitter fruit!" while the other adds, "We are that fruit!"

Dag assists in the fight as best he can with his dagger (+4 to hit, 1d4 + 2) but he has one level of exhaustion and only 15 hit points left. When the blights are defeated, Dag mutters, "Close. A scouting party, perhaps. Or an infestation. Davian knows how to defeat them. Come, we must hurry. I worry over what monsters may have found my family in the meantime."

The Martikov Refuge

The Martikovs shelter in a rotting cabin that has been slated for demolition for years now. After ten minutes of quiet, careful trekking through

After ten minutes of quiet, careful trekking, Dag leads the adventurers to a rotting cabin. Read the following:

> Dag leads you to a gray and rotting cabin that has, to put it politely, seen better days. More of a shack, it slumps to the right. Its roof has given in at one corner, and it's clear by the gaps in the walls that the cabin can keep out neither the rain nor cold. From within you hear a wheezing, a baby crying, and, curiously enough, the snapping of fingers.
>
> "It's ironic really," says Dag, "Davian complained about this cabin for years. Slated it for demolition several times, but never got around to it."
>
> A cantankerous voice bursts from the cabin, all but shouting, "Dag? Dag? Who by all the bloody gods are you talking to? Get in here, you fool! Get in here and be silent!"
>
> Dag looks to you and sighs, "Fathers-in-law, am I right?"

The Family Wounded. All the Martikovs have been wounded in some fashion, as shown on the *Martikov Wounds* table. Some were already wounded during the Keepers of the Feather's failed counterattack on Yester Hill five days ago.

- All Martikovs are suffering from the poisoned condition for breathing in crowpoison incense. For the time being, none can use their Shapechanger trait and can be harmed by nonmagical, nonsilvered weapon attacks.
- The Martikovs all have some levels of exhaustion and have lost some hit points.
- The family has been rendered vulnerable by crowpoison.

The Family in Turmoil. Even the greatest of friends and most loving of families can snap during times of stress and crisis. Throughout Act I, the Martikovs vacillate between tense, worried silence, and bursts of frustration:

- Yolanda won't cease crying. Elvir snaps at Stefania, demanding, "Can't you get [Yolanda] to shut up?" Stefania snaps back with, "She's a child, for gods' sake!"
- Adrian must keep the concussed Claudiu from falling asleep and vents his growing frustrations until at last he shakes the boy by the shoulders and shouts, "Stay awake! Stay awake, or you might never wake, Claudiu!"
- Davian is convinced that the family must reclaim the winery, but Stefania shouts at him, "It's lost! It's been lost! Give it up, father! We've worse troubles to face now! We have to reach Krezk—maybe Krezkov will give us safe harbor, maybe—" Davian cuts her off by snarling, "Without the winery, we are not the Martikovs."

Laid Low. His pride bruised, and his family endangered, Davian inevitably gets to the meat of the matter. Rely heavily on the advice in *Dramatis Personae* to roleplay him, but when he officially offers the adventures their quest, read the following:

> Wheezing in his chair, Davian Martikov places his hands on his knees and pushes. Immediately, the old patriarch hunches over with the ache and toll of years. "It pains me to say this," he says, "but we, the Martikovs, must turn to strangers in this dark hour. On behalf of Barovians everywhere, I ask you this: reclaim our ancestral lands and return the winery unharmed, lest our people at last fall prey to utter despair."
>
> "We have known of our assailants for some time," Davian explains. "Wildling druids, with whom we share ancestry. But these 'chlorofiends' as Dag so eloquently calls them, are new. Plants that thirst for blood! By all the gods! Alas, I know a thing or two of druidism. My Nan taught me, and her mother before her. As we fled our home, I saw a red-painted fool brandishing a staff carved from wood that should not be. It is clear that the chlorofiends fear and obey it. They shuddered as he waved it about, and when it dropped from his grasp, they hissed. Even a comrade of his said—in their Druidic tongue, and though it has been years since my Nan conversed with me in it, still I know enough to understand that that staff is the key. Destroy that staff and all," says Davian Martikov, "will be well."

Martikov Wounds

Character	HP	Exhaustion	Wound Description
Adrian	25	0	Adrian is relatively unscathed, but tends to Claudiu.
Claudiu	8	2	Claudiu is concussed. Adrian constantly snaps his fingers or tousles Claudiu's hair to keep the boy awake.
Dag	15	1	Dag suffered a vicious slash that ran from his neck to his ear. The right half of his face has been wrapped with a bandage that needs imminent changing.
Davian	15	0	Davian is wheezing and nearly feeble. A massive needle has punctured his lung. Only his lycanthropic regeneration has kept it from killing him. The most powerful lycanthrope, Davian's regeneration is slowly triumphing over the poison, but is inhibited also by the frailty of his advanced age.
Elvir	13	1	Elvir has a broken arm, which has been bound in a rough sling made from his torn shirtsleeve.
Martin	1	2	Martin is unconscious, his young lungs damaged from the crowpoison.
Stefania	6	2	Stefania took several needles to her left shoulder. The largest ones have been removed, but numerous infected splinters remain. She winces whenever she must move her left arm.
Viggo	1	0	Viggo refuses to speak and rocks back and forth in the fetal position.
Yolanda	1	1	Yolanda is cold, hungry, and upset, and continues to cry despite her mother's wishes.

II. Reclaiming the Winery

The battle for the winery is swift and fierce. It will be won or lost within five minutes, perhaps even one. The winery is no soundproof dungeon; once any denizen notices the adventurers, they all will. One shout alone is enough to draw attention. There is only one possible solution to stay reinforcements: fool the druids in Druidic. As the battle rages on, the horde outside approaches, adding tension to the scene and driving home the necessity of snapping the Gulthias staff. Victory is assured when the adventurers snap the *Gulthias staff* in two, slaying all blights plaguing the winery, vineyard, and surrounding lands.

There are four zones within the winery inhabited by foes, and it is from these characters we draw the combatants from for this encounter:

- W9. The Fermentation Vats: twenty-four **twig blights** and **Nala** the druid. The *Companion* removes twenty of the **twig blights**.
- W14. Wine Cellar: five **needle blights** and **Deklht** the druid.
- W16. Loading Winch: **Esmardeus**, the druid, armed with the *Gulthias staff*.
- W20. Printing Press: two **vine blights** and **Revyr** the druid.

Terrain. As mentioned before, the *Companion* drapes the winery with bloodthirsty, black vines—some as thin as a finger, some able to choke a horse to death. The vines turn the winery floor into difficult terrain for everyone but the blights and Gulthias druids.

Overall Tactics. The encounter is more enumerated below, but the chief combatants follow these tactics:

- Esmardeus, grandson of the Gulthias Prophet, is a true believer and fights until the bitter end. As the druids' striker, he hurls hard-hitting spells. If he is reduced to 10 hit points or fewer and Revyr is no longer shapeshifted, he tosses her the *Gulthias staff* so that she might change shape again and absorb the staff into her new form.
- Nala is the druids' controller, relying on spells of *hold person* or *spike growth* to hamper the party. Like Esmardeus, she is too fanatical to choose her own life over the cause.
- Revyr fights until death—which might very well take a while, for she can shapeshift twice—unless Esmardeus orders her to leave with the *Gulthias staff*. She at first shapeshifts into a **brown bear**. The second time, she chooses a **dire wolf** or shapeshifts into an **owl** to flee.
- Drekht, the druids' supporter and healer, proves to be a coward. He is the last to join the fray and first to flee. After Esmardeus dies, Drekht must succeed on a Wisdom saving throw (DC = 10 + (number of adventurers - number of druids alive)) at the end of each of his turns or flee the winery.

Phase I. Battle Begins

Nala and Esmardeus begin on the balcony. The **twig blights** start in the empty vat on the floor. Knowing that allies lie just around the corner, **Nala** and **Esmardeus** attempt to hold back the adventurers until then.

- At initiative count 20 (losing ties), a vine from the ceiling lashes out at one adventurer, who must make a DC 14 Strength saving throw or be restrained, and lifts the target 20 feet into the air. The target can repeat its saving throw at the end of its turns, ending this effect on a success. Doing so, causes the target to fall.
- Nala casts *hold person* (at 2nd level if there are more than four enemies present, otherwise it is cast at 1st level). She also casts *shillelagh* as a bonus action.
- Esmardeus casts *tidal wave*, but draws on the wine in the fermentation vat instead of conjuring water. An enemy struck by this wave of wine is left with a bitter taste on their lips—a hint that the druids have poisoned it. He also casts *shillelagh* as a bonus action.
- The **twig blights** take position at the top of the stairs to harry anyone who would climb them, or assault the least armored foes.

Phase II. Ursine Fury

The second phase begins on the third turn of combat. **Revyr** arrives with two **vine blights** from Area W20. Revyr has already cast *jump* on herself.

- Esmardeus uses a bonus action to destroy any twig blights left on the battlefield, gaining 1d6 temporary hit points per destroyed blight. On that same turn, he casts *erupting earth*, marring the Martikovs' floor.
- Nala continues to concentrate on *hold person* or attempts to cast it again if the spell failed before.
- Revyr casts *faerie fire*, then uses a bonus action to transform into a **brown bear**, leaping down onto the workshop floor if the adventures are still below. On Round 4, Revyr focuses her melee attacks on any paralyzed or restrained targets.
- The two **vine blights** stalk the balcony; with their 10 ft. reach, the blights can attack creatures directly below them. If the vine blights can't reach their foes from the balcony, they sink to the floor in a mass of vines. One uses its Entangling Plants ability.

Phase III. Red Tide

Phase III begins with Nala's death, or on the fifth round of combat (at initiative count 20, losing ties). With her dying breath, Nala destroys a fermentation vat with an errant thunderwave spell. The explosion releases a flood of poisoned wine. Any creatures on the ground floor must make a DC 14 Strength saving throw, taking 11 (2d10) bludgeoning damage on a failed save, and half as much on a successful one. On a failure, a creature is also thrown back 20 feet. The flood instantly kills any blights on the floor. The wine has a bitter taste, once again foreshadowing that it has been poisoned.

Drekht joins the fight in this round, opening the door to Area W10just in time to be struck by the flood. He makes his saving throw as normal but takes only half damage. Five **vine blights** are lumbering up the stairs behind him, but are too slow to enter the fray before Round 6. Both cautious and craven, Drekht has already warded himself with a *barkskin* spell. If his allies are wounded, he spends his turns snapping out *healing word* spells and dragging enemies towards his blights with a *thorn whip* cantrip.

The Druids Defeated

When slain, the druids offer some cryptic nonsense. If any of the adventurers speak Druidic, say it in that language; otherwise, it's broken Barovian Common.

- Esmardeus says, "He is the Ancient. He is the Land. And we are his heirs."
- Nala says, "You are too late… Wintersplinter will walk this earth…"
- Revyr says, "Death to the ravens!"
- Dekht says, "It will be… a cruel winter."

The Staff Destroyed. If the *Gulthias staff* is broken, all blights plaguing the winery and outlying lands die. Even the vines shiver with agony and die. Read the following:

> As you snap that black staff in twain, the world itself seems to scream with the hundreds-deep death outside. It's as if you were stabbed right in the ear canal—and as sure as the sun rises in better lands than Barovia, blood trickles out your ears and down your neck. Outside, hundreds of chlorofiends have just died an unceremonious, and hopefully painful, death. Even the black vines that plague this place shudder and writhe with agony before finally growing still.

Cinematography

You can up the tension and excitement in this encounter without disturbing the action economy or combat rules. As the blights outside press in on doors and windows, narrate how the adventurers deal with them. A needle blight that breaks open a window and opens fire on the party can easily be shot down by the resident archer. No actual damage was caused and no actions were taken, but it achieves a narrative effect. Tailor these descriptions to your adventurers' abilities.

III. The Ravens Taken

When the adventurers return victorious, they find that the Martikovs have been abducted by the druids. Only Davian remains, bound against the wall by vines that feed on his blood and tighten whenever other creatures approach. If you utilized the *Companion's* changes to the Village of Barovia during Chapter 3, this mirrors the Cabin of Mourning and thereby calls the adventurers back to their first days in Barovia.

Read the following when the party approaches the cabin:

> Still ecstatic over your victory, you trudge back into the woods—and find that the vines have reached here too in your absence. The vines are everywhere. They strangle tree trunks and snake across the wet earth like black veins. The cabin itself has been reduced to a thorned prison, and as you burst inside, you see that the Martikovs are missing. The air is thick with that pungent odor you found in the winery, and fresh blood pools upon the floor—at least for now. Tiny vines have reached out to drink at the sanguine pool.
>
> "H-help…" comes a voice at the far end. "H-help… my family. T-t-taken, they were."
>
> As you squint into the gloom, past the mass of vines, you spot him: Davian Martikov. The vines have him bound to the wall, three feet from the ground, every limb shackled. A vine has bit deep into his neck to feed upon his lifeblood.

Davian is still alive, but will die within an hour if not freed from the vines, which can be severed by dealing 10 damage. He implores the adventurers to follow the druids to Yester Hill. Read the following:

> Davian Martikov crashes to the floor. Sensing his weakness, the vines curl up like snakes. With a snarl, the old man whips out an arm at the empty air, as if to condemn the entire world. He pounds his fist against what remains of the wooden floor and seems to gather himself.
>
> With great effort, Davian rises and slumps into a half-rotten chair. His breathing is faint and troubled. It is clear there's little time left on this earth for the Martikov patriarch.
>
> "My family… Gone. They come with more of that noxious incense. There is but one place the druids would take them: Yester Hill. Something foul stands on that hill. A tree whose existence I did not wish to believe, but…" Davian gestures to the mass of vines around him. "A tree that thirsts for the blood of men, a tree whose seed was first watered by the blood of the vampire, freely given."
>
> Davian shivers. "There can only be one reason my family would be taken… to feed that godsdamned tree and fuel some foul plot. Go. Go, save my family. Please."

Davian elaborates on the Yester Hill, sharing all secrets except his family's wereraven curse. If the crowpoison was successfully identified, and Davian is confronted over its use, he still refuses to reveal the truth and instead says, "There are secrets that I will take to my grave. Secrets that go beyond me and my loved ones. Secrets that must remain unspoken, lest the ears and eyes of this realm at last learn a truth and—in one fell swoop—snuff out our last hope." When Davian has grown tired of the adventurers, he shouts, "Go! Leave me! These vines will no longer trouble me. They prey only on weakness, and I have none left in my heart! My family is in peril and I must act, and you must leave!"

If freed, Davian musters his strength and, with a titanic effort of will, overcomes the crowpoison to transform into his raven form after the adventurers leave. Read the following:

> As you leave the cabin and Davian Martikov behind, you hear—distantly—a thud chased by a snarl. Before you can even return to help the curmudgeon up, you spot a raven flit through the gaping roof and flutter off into the dusk.

If the adventurers check the cabin, they find Davian gone, with several bloodied feathers—black, but streaked with silver—surrounding the chair he was last seen in.

Approaching the Winery

If you're running *Blood and Wine* and using the *Briarthorn Riot* variant, replace the narration text in Curse of Strahd with the text below:

> The road weaves through the woods until at last it opens up upon an unsettling sight: upon a hill sits a large two-story stone building choked with vines so dark the building underneath can barely be seen against the gray sky.
>
> The vast vineyards that surround the winery have found no better treatments. The black vines ebb down the hill, invading those green rows.

Areas of Note

The following areas are of note; others don't warrant your attention unless combat occurs therein.

Entrances to the Winery

It is important to note the entrances into the winery, as the adventurers must rush inside to escape the blight horde. See the Winery Entrances table.

Barricades. When the druids invaded the winery, they did not do so gently. Scrap wood and planks and broken equipment is everywhere. A character with carpenter's tools can use an action to barricade a window or door from the blights. Assume only druids and vine blights can burst through a barricade;

- Druids can triumph over barricades by succeeding on a DC 15 Strength check (or 20, if the character spent 1 minute fortifying the barricade) or by a thunderwave spell.
- Vine blights simply grow their tendrils beneath the door over the course of 1d4 rounds to remove the barricades from inside. A growing tendril (AC 10, HP 5) can be severed.

Windows. There is no special protection for the winery's windows, which are locked but can still be broken by dealing 5 points of non-poison, non-psychic damage to the glass. An action can then be made to clear the broken glass from the frame. Characters that clamber through a window with glass still in it take 1d4 slashing damage unless they succeed on a DC 13 Dexterity (Acrobatics) check. Areas W10-12 are the only rooms on the ground floor with windows.

W1. Stables

The Briarthorn Riot

The two draft horses stabled here were not spared from the druids. Vines coil about each beast, drawing blood to feed the Gulthias Tree many miles away. By when the adventurers arrive, one horse has already been sucked dry. The other has 4 hit points remaining and bucks against its

Winery Entrances

Entrance	Status
W2. Loading Dock	The door is broken and ajar. It can't be closed unless a *mending* cantrip is cast on it, but it can be barricaded.
W3. Barrel Maker's Workshop	The door is barred from the inside.
W5. Veranda	Both doors are locked and require a DC 20 Strength check to break open.
W8. Storage	The door is open and can be barricaded.
W10. Glassblowers' Workshop	The door is barred from the inside. A window can be broken to gain entrance.
W11. Spiral Staircase	A window can be broken to gain entrance.
W12. Ramp	A window can be broken to gain entrance.

thorned bonds in vain.

The vines here have an AC of 10 and 15 HP. If severed, the horse can be saved. A successful DC 17 Wisdom (Animal Handling) check is required to calm the beast. On a failure, it bursts from the stables. Creatures in front of it must succeed on a DC 13 Dexterity saving throw or take 1d8 bludgeoning damage and be knocked prone. The horse is also calmed if it receives 6 hit points or more of magical healing.

W2. Loading Dock

A druid (Esmardeus per the Companion) lurks above this room in Area W16. If he spots the adventurers, he will shout out and alert his comrades to the intrusion. He then backs away immediately to break the adventurers' line of sight.

W6. Well

The Briarthorn Riot

Per this variant, the black vines that choke the winery spill out from this well. Read the following when the adventurers near it:

> From this bruised and swollen well pulses a nest of snake-like vines, inching forward from deep below ground. The sight is sickening. The black vines that choke the winery have clearly originated from this recess. As you approach, the vines pause, as if caught in an embarrassing act—like a child reaching into a sweets jar or an animal that suddenly detects a predator. After several moments of stillness and silence, the vines begin to inch forward again, their troubles forgotten.

Crowpoison Incense

As described in Variants & Revisions above, the druids resorted to crowpoison incense to poison the Martikovs. The entire winery reeks with the scent of the incense, which can be described like garlic, lemon, and rot—scents alien to a winery. As the adventurers explore the winery, remind them of this stench and scatter half-burned incense sticks (made of crowpoison, and hurled by the druids like grenades) here and there. Crowpoison can be identified with a DC 14 Intelligence (Nature) check.

W7. Outhouse

A **needle blight** sits here, waiting to ambush whomever uses the outhouse. Though the Martikovs have already been driven off, no druid has bothered to fetch the blight.

W9. Fermentation Vats

A **druid** (**Nala**, per the *Companion*) has poisoned the wine here. To hint at this, put an empty vial in her robes. If she is knocked prone or slain, the vial shatters. It is up to the adventurers to rationalize what the vial once contained.

Blood and Wine

Per the *Blood and Wine* storyline, this area becomes the stage for a pitched battle between the adventurers and all four druids, plus their **vine blights**. As such, twenty of the twenty-four **twig blights** have been removed. The four **swarms of raven**s above have also been removed from the fight.

W14. Wine Cellar

A **druid** (**Drekht**, per the Companion) lurks here with five **vine blights**. As described in W15, he has the potential to launch a devastating trap.

W15. Brown Mold

If the party has proven too troublesome for the druids, they use a **twig blight** to lure the adventurers into this area. A **druid** (taken from Area W14 or lurking nearby in the shape of a rat) then hurls a *produce flame* cantrip into the room to cause the brown mold to all expand. The druid then attempts to shut the door, lock it, and barricade it with vines. If the adventurers fail to escape, they freeze to death.

Trap. To run this encounter smoothly, follow the guidelines below. Admittedly, it requires a bit of rule-bending to achieve the desired outcome.

- As the adventurers explore Area W14, a **twig blight** giggles loudly and scampers into W15. It takes the Dodge action if attacked and otherwise enjoys enough plot armor to enter the darkened room unscathed.
- Once the adventurers give chase, roll initiative. At the start of the round, the **druid** uses a bonus action to revert back to his true form and then uses his action to hurl a *produce flame* cantrip past the adventurers. Only a *counterspell* can stop this. Using his one object interaction that turn, the druid then shuts the door (no action required) and locks it. The druid does not get to take his turn, given the tomfoolery he performed at the start of the round.
- For the remainder of the first round, the door is easily busted open: a DC 13 Strength check is all that's necessary.
- At the start of the next round, the ten patches of brown mold expand. All adventurers inside the room must make a DC 22 (up from 12, given the ten patches of mold) Constitution saving throw, taking 4d10 cold damage on a success, or half as much on a failure. A character that succeeds on a DC 13 Intelligence (Nature) check identifies this as brown mold and recalls the solution to destroy it: dealing cold damage.
- The druid acts on his initiative. As an action, he expends a 2nd-level spell slot to barricade the door with vines, concentrating as if on a spell. The vines vanish if his concentration is broken. For every round the vines exist, the DC to break open the door increases by 2, up to a maximum of 25. After 1 minute of concentrating, the spell ends and the vines become permanent. At any point, the vines can be destroyed (AC 10, HP 5 + (5 x each round since the vines were conjured).
- The druid flees once the vines are permanent, or after he has been reduced to 12 or fewer hit points.

W16. Loading Wench

A **druid** (**Esmardeus** per the Companion) lurks here. In Curse of Strahd, he proves to be a coward. If you run *Blood and Wine*, he instead fights with surprising fervor. Regardless, he backs away to break the adventurers' line of sight if they are below him in Area W2.

W18. Kitchen and Dining Room

If you're feeling particularly sadistic, a **twig blight** hides in one of the pantry cabinets. Once opened, it leaps onto the opener's face with a maddened giggle. To remove the blight, a character must successfully contest their Strength (Athletics) check against the blight's Dexterity (Acrobatics) check. While on the character's face, consider the blight to have three-quarters cover, granting it a +5 bonus to its AC and Dexterity saving throws. It savages the character's head until death—its own, or its victim's, after which the blight hops off, giggles and runs out from the room.

W20. Printing Press

The **druid** here (**Revyr**, per the Companion) is with two **vine blights**. Unless alerted to intruders, she is trying to figure out Davian Martikov's printing press.

Appendix A: Magic Items

The following magic item is featured in this chapter, which is wielded by Esmardeus, the druid in Area W16.

Gulthias Staff

Staff, rare (requires attunement)

Made from the branch of a Gulthias tree, a *Gulthias staff* is a spongy, black length of wood. Its evil makes beasts visibly uncomfortable while within 30 feet of it. The staff has 10 charges and regains 1d6 + 4 of its expended charges daily at dusk. If the staff is broken or burned to ashes, its wood releases a terrible, inhuman scream that can be heard out to a range of 300 feet. All blights that can hear the scream immediately wither and die.

Vampiric Strike. The staff can be wielded as a magic quarterstaff. On a hit, it deals damage as a normal quarterstaff, and you can expend 1 charge to regain a number of hit points equal to the damage dealt by the weapon. Each time a charge is spent, red blood oozes from the staff's pores, and you must succeed on a DC 12 Wisdom saving throw or be afflicted with short term madness.

Blight Bane. While you are attuned to the staff, blights and other evil plant creatures don't regard you as hostile unless you harm them.

Appendix B: Bestiary

The following creatures are featured in this chapter:

Brown Bear

Large beast, unaligned

Armor Class 11 (natural armor)
Hit Points 34 (4d10 + 12)
Speed 40 ft., climb 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
19 (+4)	10 (+0)	16 (+3)	2 (-4)	13 (+1)	7 (-2)

Skills Perception +3
Senses passive Perception X13
Languages —
Challenge 1 (200 XP) **Proficiency Bonus:** +2

Keen Smell. The bear has advantage on Wisdom (Perception) checks that rely on smell.

Actions

Multiattack. The bear makes two attacks: one with its bite and one with its claws.

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 8 (1d8 + 4) piercing damage.

Claws. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 11 (2d6 + 4) slashing damage.

Drekht

Medium humanoid (human), chaotic evil

Armor Class 14 (hide armor; 16 with *barkskin*)
Hit Points 27 (5d8 + 5)
Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
9 (-1)	15 (+2)	12 (+1)	14 (+2)	15 (+2)	11 (+0)

Saving Throws Int +4
Skills Medicine +4, Nature +5, Perception +4
Senses passive Perception X14
Languages Common, Druidic
Challenge 2 (450 XP) **Proficiency Bonus:** +2

Actions

Quarterstaff. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +2 to hit (+4 to hit with *shillelagh*), reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 3 (1d6) bludgeoning damage, 4 (1d8) bludgeoning damage if wielded with two hands, or 6 (1d8 + 2) bludgeoning damage with *shillelagh*.

Spellcasting. Drekht casts one of the following spells, using Wisdom as the spellcasting ability (spell save DC 12):

At will: *spare the dying, thorn whip*

2/day each: *barkskin, earth tremor*

1/day each: *enhance ability, thunderwave*

Bonus Actions

Spellcasting. Drekht casts one of the following spells, using Wisdom as the spellcasting ability (spell save DC 12):

At will: *shillelagh*

3/day: *healing word*

Reactions

Dampen Elements. When Drekht or a creature he can see within 30 feet takes acid, cold, fire, lightning, or thunder damage, he grants resistance to that creature against that instance of damage.

Dire Wolf

Large beast, unaligned
Armor Class 14 (natural armor)
Hit Points 37 (5d10 + 10)
Speed 50 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
17 (+3)	15 (+2)	15 (+2)	3 (-4)	12 (+1)	7 (-2)

Skills Perception +3, Stealth +4
Senses passive Perception X13
Languages —
Challenge 1 (200 XP) **Proficiency Bonus:** +2

Keen Hearing and Smell. The wolf has advantage on Wisdom (Perception) checks that rely on hearing or smell.
Pack Tactics. The wolf has advantage on an attack roll against a creature if at least one of the wolf's allies is within 5 feet of the creature and the ally isn't incapacitated.

Actions

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 10 (2d6 + 3) piercing damage. If the target is a creature, it must succeed on a DC 13 Strength saving throw or be knocked prone.

Draft Horse

Large beast, unaligned
Armor Class 10
Hit Points 19 (3d10 + 3)
Speed 40 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
18 (+4)	10 (+0)	12 (+1)	2 (-4)	11 (+0)	7 (-2)

Senses passive Perception 10
Languages —
Challenge 1/4 (50 XP) **Proficiency Bonus:** +2

Actions

Hooves. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 9 (2d4 +4) bludgeoning damage.

Druid

Medium humanoid (any race), any alignment
Armor Class X11 (16 with *barkskin*)
Hit Points 27 (5d8 + 5)
Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
10 (+0)	12 (+1)	13 (+1)	12 (+1)	15 (+2)	11 (+0)

Skills Medicine +4, Nature +3, Perception +4
Senses passive Perception 14
Languages Druidic plus any two languages
Challenge 2 (450 XP) **Proficiency Bonus:** +2

Spellcasting. The druid is a 4th-level spellcaster. Its spellcasting ability is Wisdom (spell save DC 12, +4 to hit with spell attacks). It has the following druid spells prepared:
Cantrips (at will): *druidcraft, produce flame, shillelagh*
1st level (4 slots): *entangle, longstrider, speak with animals, thunderwave*
2nd level (3 slots): *animal messenger, barkskin*

Actions

Quarterstaff. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +2 to hit (+4 to hit with *shillelagh*), reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 3 (1d6) bludgeoning damage, 4 (1d8) bludgeoning damage if wielded with two hands, or 6 (1d8 + 2) bludgeoning damage with *shillelagh*.

Esmardeus

Medium humanoid (human), chaotic evil
Armor Class 14 (hide armor; 16 with *barkskin*)
Hit Points 39 (6d8 + 16)
Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
16 (+3)	14 (+2)	14 (+2)	11 (+0)	16 (+3)	14 (+2)

Saving Throws Int +3, Wis +6
Skills Medicine +6, Nature +3, Perception +6
Senses passive Perception 16
Languages Common, Druidic
Challenge 5 (1,800 XP) **Proficiency Bonus:** +3

Special Equipment. Esmardeus wields a *Gulthias staff*.

Actions

Multiattack. Esmardeus makes two attacks with his *Gulthias staff.*
Gulthias Staff. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 6 (1d6 + 3) bludgeoning damage, or 7 (1d8 + 3) bludgeoning damage if used with two hands to make a melee attack. The staff has 10 charges. When he hits a creature, Esmardeus can expend 1 charge to regain a number of hit points equal to the damage dealt.
Spellcasting. Esmardeus casts one of the following spells, using Wisdom as the spellcasting ability (spell save DC 14):
3/day each: *barkskin, entangle*
2/day each: *tidal wave*
1/day each: *erupting earth*

Bonus Actions

Spellcasting. Esmardeus casts one of the following spells, using Wisdom as the spellcasting ability (spell save DC 14):
At will: *shillelagh*

Nala

Medium humanoid (human), chaotic evil
Armor Class 11 (16 with *barkskin*)
Hit Points 27 (5d8 + 5)
Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
10 (+0)	12 (+1)	13 (+1)	12 (+1)	16 (+3)	11 (+0)

Saving Throws Int +3, Wis +5
Skills Medicine +4, Nature +3, Perception +5
Senses passive Perception 15
Languages Common, Druidic
Challenge 2 (450 XP) **Proficiency Bonus:** +2

Actions

Quarterstaff. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +2 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 3 (1d6) bludgeoning damage, or 4 (1d8) bludgeoning damage if wielded with two hands.
Spellcasting. Nala casts one of the following spells, using Wisdom as the spellcasting ability (spell save DC 13):
At will: *thorn whip*
2/day each: *barkskin*, *hold person*, *thunderwave*
1/day each: *heat metal*, *spike growth*

Needle Blight

Medium plant, neutral evil
Armor Class 12
Hit Points 11 (2d8 + 2)
Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
12 (+1)	12 (+1)	13 (+1)	4 (-3)	8 (-1)	3 (-4)

Condition Immunities blinded, deafened
Senses blindsight 60 ft. (blind beyond this radius), passive Perception 9
Languages understands Common but can't speak
Challenge 1/4 (50 XP) **Proficiency Bonus:** +2

Actions

Claws. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +3 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 6 (2d4 + 1) piercing damage.
Needles. *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +3 to hit, range 30/60 ft., one target. *Hit:* 8 (2d6 + 1) piercing damage.

Owl

Tiny beast, unaligned
Armor Class 11
Hit Points 1 (1d4 - 1)
Speed 5 ft., fly 60 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
3 (-4)	13 (+1)	8 (-1)	2 (-4)	12 (+1)	7 (-2)

Skills Perception +3, Stealth +3
Senses darkvision 120 ft., passive Perception 13
Languages —
Challenge 0 (0 XP) **Proficiency Bonus:** +2

Flyby. The owl doesn't provoke opportunity attacks when it flies out of an enemy's reach.
Keen Hearing and Sight. The owl has advantage on Wisdom (Perception) checks that rely on hearing or sight.

Actions

Talons. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +3 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 1 slashing damage.

Swarm of Ravens

Medium swarm of tiny beasts, unaligned
Armor Class 12
Hit Points 24 (7d8 - 7)
Speed 10 ft., fly 50 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
6 (-2)	14 (+2)	8 (-1)	3 (-4)	12 (+1)	6 (-2)

Skills Perception +5
Damage Resistances bludgeoning, piercing, slashing
Condition Immunities charmed, frightened, grappled, paralyzed, petrified, prone, restrained, stunned
Senses passive Perception 15
Languages —
Challenge 1/4 (50 XP) **Proficiency Bonus:** +2

Swarm. The swarm can occupy another creature's space and vice versa, and the swarm can move through any opening large enough for a Tiny raven. The swarm can't regain hit points or gain temporary hit points.

Actions

Beaks. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target in the swarm's space. *Hit:* 7 (2d6) piercing damage, or 3 (1d6) piercing damage if the swarm has half of its hit points or fewer.

Revyr

Medium humanoid (human), chaotic evil
Armor Class 13 (hide armor)
Hit Points 39 (6d8 + 12)
Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
16 (+3)	12 (+1)	15 (+2)	11 (+0)	14 (+2)	11 (+0)

Saving Throws Str +5, Con +4
Skills Athletics +5, Perception +4
Senses passive Perception 14
Languages Common, Druidic
Challenge 4 (1,100 XP) **Proficiency Bonus:** +2

Lovers' Rampage. Revyr enrages if she sees Esmardeus slain. For the next minute, Revyr's AC increases by 2, she becomes immune to the charmed and frightened conditions, and her melee attacks, be they in her human form or while shapeshifted into a beast, deal +3 damage on a hit.

Actions

Multiattack. Revyr attacks twice with her maul.

Maul. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 9 (2d6 + 3) bludgeoning damage.

Spellcasting. Revyr casts one of the following spells, using Wisdom as the spellcasting ability (spell save DC 12):

1/day each: *entangle, faerie fire, jump*

Bonus Actions

Wildshape (2/Day). Revyr magically transforms into a Beast with a challenge rating of 1 or less, remaining in that form for up to 2 hours. Revyr's equipment melds into her new form. She reverts to her true form if she dies or falls unconscious. Revyr also can revert to true form using a bonus action. While shapeshifted, Revyr's statistics are replaced by the statistics of that beast, except Revyr keeps her Intelligence, Wisdom, and Charisma scores and this bonus action.

Tree Blight

Huge plant, neutral evil
Armor Class 15 (natural armor)
Hit Points 92 (8d12 + 40)
Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
23 (+6)	10 (+0)	20 (+5)	6 (-2)	10 (+0)	3 (-4)

Condition Immunities blinded, deafened
Senses blindsight 60 ft. (blind beyond this radius), passive Perception 10
Languages understands Common and Druidic but can't speak
Challenge 7 (2,900 XP) **Proficiency Bonus:** +3

False Appearance. While the blight remains motionless, it is indistinguishable from a dead tree.

Siege Monster. The blight deals double damage to objects and structures.

Actions

Multiattack. The blight makes one Branch attack and one Grasping Root attack.

Branch. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +9 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 16 (3d6 + 6) bludgeoning damage.

Grasping Root. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +9 to hit, reach 15 ft., one creature not grappled by the blight. *Hit:* The target is grappled (escape DC 15). Until the grapple ends, the target takes 9 (1d6 + 6) bludgeoning damage at the start of each of its turns. The root has AC 15 and can be severed by dealing 6 slashing damage or more to it at once. Cutting the root doesn't hurt the blight, but ends the grapple.

Bonus Actions

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +9 to hit, reach 5 ft., one creature grappled by the blight. *Hit:* 19 (3d8 + 6) piercing damage.

Twig Blight

Small plant, neutral evil
Armor Class 13 (natural armor)
Hit Points 4 (1d6 + 1)
Speed 20 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
6 (-2)	13 (+1)	12 (+1)	4 (-3)	8 (-1)	3 (-4)

Skills +3
Damage Vulnerabilities fire
Condition Immunities blinded, deafened
Senses blindsight 60 ft. (blind beyond this radius), passive Perception 9
Languages understands Common but can't speak
Challenge 1/8 (25 XP) **Proficiency Bonus:** +2

False Appearance. While the blight remains motionless, it is indistinguishable from a dead shrub.

Actions

Claws. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +3 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 3 (1d4 + 1) piercing damage.

Rat

Tiny beast, unaligned
Armor Class 10
Hit Points 1 (1d4 -1)
Speed 20 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
2 (-4)	11 (+0)	9 (-1)	2 (-4)	10 (+0)	4 (-3)

Senses darkvision 30 ft., passive Perception 10
Languages —
Challenge 0 (0 XP) **Proficiency Bonus:** +2

Keen Smell. The rat has advantage on Wisdom (Perception) checks that rely on smell.

Actions

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +0 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. Hit: 1 piercing damage.

Vine Blight

Medium plant, lawful evil
Armor Class 12 (natural armor)
Hit Points 26 (4d8 + 4)
Speed 10 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
15 (+2)	8 (-1)	14 (+2)	5 (-3)	10 (+0)	3 (-4)

Skills Stealth +1
Condition Immunities blinded, deafened
Senses blindsight 60 ft. (blind beyond this radius), passive Perception 10
Languages Common
Challenge 1/2 (100 XP) **Proficiency Bonus:** +2

False Appearance. While the blight remains motionless, it is indistinguishable from a tangle of vines.

Actions

Constrict. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target. *Hit:* 9 (2d6 + 2) bludgeoning damage, and a Large or smaller target is grappled (escape DC 12). Until this grapple ends, the target is restrained, and the blight can't constrict another target.

Entangling Plants (Recharge 5–6). Grasping roots and vines sprout in a 15-foot radius centered on the blight, withering away after 1 minute. For the duration, that area is difficult terrain for nonplant creatures. In addition, each creature of the blight's choice in that area when the plants appear must succeed on a DC 12 Strength saving throw or become restrained. A creature can use its action to make a DC 12 Strength check, freeing it self or another entangled creature within reach on a success.

Wereraven

Medium humanoid (any race, shapechanger), lawful good
Armor Class 12
Hit Points 31 (7d8)
Speed 30 ft. (fly 50 ft. in raven and hybrid forms)

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
10 (+0)	15 (+2)	11 (+0)	13 (+1)	15 (+2)	14 (+2)

Skills Insight +4, Perception +6
Damage Immunities bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical attacks not made with silvered weapons
Senses passive Perception X16
Languages Common (can't speak in raven form)
Challenge 2 (450 XP) **Proficiency Bonus:** +2

Shapechanger. The wereraven can use its action to polymorph into a raven-humanoid hybrid or into a raven, or back into its human form. Its statistics, other than its size, are the same in each form. Any equipment it is wearing or carrying isn't transformed. It reverts to its human form if it dies.

Mimicry. The wereraven can mimic simple sounds it has heard, such as a person whispering, a baby crying, or an animal chittering. A creature that hears the sounds can tell they are imitations with a successful DC 10 Wisdom (Insight) check.

Actions

Multiattack (Human or Hybrid Form Only). The wereraven makes two weapon attacks, one of which can be with its hand crossbow.

Beak (Raven or Hybrid Form Only). *Melee Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 1 piercing damage in raven form, or 4 (1d4 + 2) piercing damage in hybrid form. If the target is humanoid, it must succeed on a DC 10 Constitution saving throw or be cursed with wereraven lycanthropy.

Shortsword (Human or Hybrid Form Only). *Melee Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 5 (1d6 + 2) piercing damage.

Hand Crossbow (Human or Hybrid Form Only). *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, range 30/120 ft., one target. *Hit:* 5 (1d6 + 2) piercing damage.

Appendix C: Items & Effects

The following effects are featured in this chapter:

Brown Mold

Hazard

Brown mold feeds on warmth, drawing heat from anything around it. A patch of brown mold typically covers a 10-foot square, and the temperature within 30 feet of it is always frigid.

When a creature moves to within 5 feet of the mold for the first time on a turn or starts its turn there, it must make a DC 12 Constitution saving throw, taking 22 (4d10) cold damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one.

Brown mold is immune to fire, and any source of fire brought within 5 feet of a patch causes it to instantly expand outward in the direction of the fire, covering a 10-foot-square area (with the source of the fire at the center of that area). A patch of brown mold exposed to an effect that deals cold damage is instantly destroyed.

Madness

Madness can be short-term, long-term, or indefinite. Most relatively mundane effects impose short-term madness, which lasts for just a few minutes. More horrific effects or cumulative effects can result in long-term or indefinite madness.

A character afflicted with short-term madness is subjected to an effect from the Short-Term Madness table for 1d10 minutes.

A character afflicted with long-term madness is subjected to an effect from the Long-Term Madness table for 1d10 × 10 hours.

A character afflicted with indefinite madness gains a new character flaw from the Indefinite Madness table that lasts until cured.

Short-Term Madness

d100	Flaw (lasts 1d10 minutes)
01-15	The character retreats into his or her mind and becomes paralyzed. The effect ends if the character takes any damage.
21-30	The character becomes incapacitated and spends the duration screaming, laughing, or weeping.
31-40	The character becomes frightened and must use his or her action and movement each round to flee from the source of the fear.
41-50	The character begins babbling and is incapable of normal speech or spellcasting.
51-60	The character must use his or her action each round to attack the nearest creature.
61-70	The character experiences vivid hallucinations and has disadvantage on ability checks.
71-75	The character does whatever anyone tells him or her to do that isn't obviously self-destructive.
76-80	The character experiences an overpowering urge to eat something strange such as dirt, slime, or offal.
81-90	The character is stunned.
91-100	The character falls unconscious.